

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

Department of Administration

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

TAC members present

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair
Mr. Everett Stuart, Vice Chair
Ms. Meredith Brady
Mr. Alan Brodd
Mr. Albert Dahlberg
Dr. Judith Drew
Mr. Ronald Gagnon
Mr. George Monaghan
Ms. Lillian Picchione
Mr. Barry Schiller
Ms. Pam Sherrill
Mr. Michael Wood

Public Member
RI Association of Railroad Passengers
RI Department of Transportation
Town of Woonsocket
Public Member
Governor's Commission on Disabilities
RI Department of Environmental Management
RI Consulting Engineers (RICE)
RI Public Transit Authority
RI Sierra Club
RI Chapter, APA
Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

TAC members absent

Mr. Lloyd Albert
Ms. Sue Barker
Mr. Dan Baudouin
Mr. Michael Cassidy
Mr. Richard Crenca
Mr. David Everett
Mr. Daniel Porter
Mr. Henry Sherlock
Ms. Dinalyn Spears
Dr. Robert Vanderslice
Mr. Michael Walker

AAA Southern New England
Greenways Alliance
Providence Foundation
Public Member
City of Warwick
City of Providence
RI Airport Corporation
Construction Industries of RI
Narragansett Indian Tribe
RI Department of Health
RI Economic Development Corporation

Others in attendance

Corey Bobba
Carmen Boucher
Lori Fissette
Erin Kilouff
Francisco Lovera
Colleen Polselli
Sean Raymond
Bob Rocchio
Christos Xenophontos

Federal Highway Administration
RI Dept. of Health - OSHCN
RI Department of Transportation
Brown University
RI Department of Transportation
RI Dept. of Health
RI Department of Transportation
RI Department of Transportation
RI Department of Transportation

Statewide Planning Staff Present

Mr. Jared Rhodes
Ms. Karen Scott
Ms. Linsey Callaghan
Ms. Dawn Vittorioso

Chief
Assistant Chief
Supervising Planner
Executive Assistant

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was none.

3. MAP-21 Educational Series – Rhode Island's Traffic Safety Program

RIDOT Staff Presentation – *for information*

Mr. Sean Raymond of RIDOT presented on RIDOT's highway safety program, including Rhode Island's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), which is the plan for the state's highway safety improvements. Stakeholders involved in the development of the SHSP include RIDOT, Statewide Planning, AAA, RI State Police, area universities, insurance companies, and others. The overall safety program focuses on engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency response. The SHSP focuses on the behavioral side, and the highway safety improvement program focuses more on the engineering side. The goal is to reduce and hopefully eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on the roadways and the human and financial costs associated.

Mr. Brodd asked how Rhode Island's 0.84 fatalities per hundred million vehicle miles traveled rate compared to other states. Mr. Rocchio said anything under one is a good number. The Safety Program's goal is zero deaths by 2030, with a 3.2% reduction annually. Mr. Raymond said that resources are needed to reach the goal, including additional staff focusing on safety and behavioral improvements and engaged safety stakeholders. Mr. Raymond stated that providing training is important. Mr. Schiller asked if legislators are part of RIDOT's stakeholder group. Mr. Rocchio answered that House and Senate legislators were invited and that they sent representatives to a couple of the SHSP stakeholder meetings. Legislation is an important part of the SHSP.

The amount spent on engineering for safety has doubled to almost \$14 million through funding provided by the federal government however there is the expectation to meet specific safety performance measures. There can be a specific approach to improve top crash sites or a systematic approach for sites that are similar to where the crashes occurred. There are various types of eligible treatments; the federal government has done the research. There are special provisions for high risk roads. The five year rolling average for fatalities has decreased by 10%; serious injuries have decreased by 15% since 2010.

The primary seatbelt law first passed provisionally in 2011 and then officially in 2013. This has led to an 8% increase in the use of seatbelts since 2012. Mr. Rocchio commented that nothing else could have been done on the engineering side that would have led to this increase in seatbelt use. The 8% increase translates into 2 or 3 lives saved annually. Nationally, increased seatbelt use has led to a reduction in fatalities and serious injuries; sometimes passing laws is more effective than engineering solutions.

Mr. Raymond explained some of the safety projects. For any project implemented, complete streets concepts are used when appropriate. Road safety assessments are used to identify safety and counter measures. Cross median crashes have been eliminated due to installation of statewide median guiderails at cost of approximately \$3.5 million; partial crashes have been reduced by 30%. All fatal and

serious crashes in that circumstance have been eliminated thus far. Another project improved curves on specific highway segments; the benefits more than paid for the changes. Dr. Drew asked how “crash cost saved” is measured. Mr. Raymond responded there are costs associated with medical costs for fatalities and serious injuries. Ms. Sherrill asked what defines a vulnerable road user. Mr. Raymond replied that they are people on mopeds, wheel chairs, pedicles, pedestrians, or any non-motorized user.

Mr. Rocchio stated that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has said that DOTs should focus on older drivers by installing larger, brighter signs and markings. Wrong way driving is also a problem, and RIDOT is thinking of ways to remedy these increasing occurrences. Increasing prescription drug use may be a cause. The agency has also plans to reduce the number of traffic lanes through road diets. Ms. Shocket asked if there is any recent evidence showing that lane reductions improve safety. Mr. Rocchio said there are benefits, especially when reducing from 4 to 3 lanes. Significant benefits accrue when multiple lanes in the same direction are removed. Mr. Brodd commented that an educational program in using the turning lane is needed. Mr. Schiller added that roundabouts are great when everyone knows the how to use them correctly. Mr. Rocchio stated education was needed when they were implemented in Rhode Island.

Mr. Gagnon asked if intense storms caused by climate change will require more drainage improvements. Mr. Raymond stated that drainage problems are a cause of many crashes. It is hard to maintain the catch basins due to staffing problems. Ms. Brady said part of the Governor’s Plan is to use funds from the gas tax to clean more catch basins. Mr. Gagnon asked if pervious pavement was being used in Rhode Island. Mr. Rocchio answered that RIDOT uses certain pavements that are better in wet conditions.

Mr. Schiller stated that transit buses and rail are about 28 times safer than autos; therefore, using more transit is also a safety consideration. He added that snow obstructs many bus stops, and passengers have to wait in the streets. Snow needs to be removed from sidewalks, and RIDOT should clear some sidewalks on state roads. Recently, two pedestrians, including one in a wheelchair, were killed in a crosswalk. Some road safety bills have been filed in the General Assembly. One is an interlock device for those convicted of drunk driving, and another would ban the use of handheld cell phones while driving except for in emergencies. There is already a no texting bill, but it is difficult for police to enforce since handheld cell phones are legal in Rhode Island. There are also efforts to reduce speeds. As a safety measure, protective bike lanes are needed. Most people do not bike on roads because they think it is unsafe.

Ms. Sherrill agreed with Mr. Schiller on sidewalks and snow removal. Ms. Sherrill stated that in Massachusetts, sidewalks are plowed and snow is removed from the sidewalks and people can walk in the winter. It is an amazing culture shift between Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Unfortunately, Rhode Island does not seem to clear the sideways as much as Massachusetts. This deters winter pedestrian activity including walking to school. Mr. Schiller commented how high school students in Providence cannot get a bus pass unless they live over three miles. Ms. Sherrill stated that in Massachusetts, in order to commit to building a sidewalk in the town on the sidewalk near the school, they have to commit to clear the sidewalk. Classes were not held until those sidewalks were plowed.

Ms. Shocket stated that since a quorum was now present at the meeting, the TAC could vote on agenda item #2.

4. Approval of January 23rd Meeting Minutes – for action (Agenda Item #2)

Initially the approval of the TAC Minutes was delayed until a quorum was reached. At this point in the meeting a quorum was reached. Upon motion to approve by Ms. Brady, seconded by Mr. Brodd, the meeting minutes were accepted unanimously.

5. Draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan 2014

Ms. Callaghan stated that copies of the Rhode Island State Rail Plan's Public Hearing and Comment Period Report were mailed to TAC members. The document is a summary of the oral and written comments received and the responses provided by staff on the State Rail Plan. Overall most of the comments were positive. Some of the comments led to changes in the Plan and are noted in the track changes version, mostly for clarification. The next step is the Technical Committee's review of the Plan and Public Hearing Report, followed by the State Planning Council's review, and then the Federal Railroad Administration. Ms. Callaghan asked that the TAC recommend approval of the Rhode Island State Rail Plan and the Public Hearing Report to the State Planning Council unless anyone has any questions. Mr. Brodd moved to recommend approval by the State Planning Council seconded by Mr. Stuart. The motion was passed with Michael Wood opposed.

Mr. Schiller asked if the State Planning Council will see the Public Hearing Report. Ms. Callaghan answered that it will be included with the State Rail Plan. Mr. Schiller hopes both the State Planning Council and the Federal Railroad Administration have the opportunity to see the Public Hearing Report.

6. RI Dept. of Health's Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention Disability and Health Grant

Ms. Colleen Polselli from the Office of Special Needs in the RI Dept. of Health was there to provide some information on the State's disability and health programs. Ms. Carmen Boucher, Community Liaison from the RI Dept. of Health was also present. Ms. Polselli and Ms. Boucher provided the following handouts to the TAC related to their program:

- State Disability and Health Programs
- Policies and Procedures for Use of Photographs
- RI Dept. of Health Strategic Plan for Health and Wellness of Rhode Islanders with Special Needs, Disabilities and Chronic Conditions 2013 – 2018

Ms. Polselli stated that the RI Dept. of Health received a Center for Disease Control (CDC) grant to promote health and well being for people with disabilities. Among the accomplishments of the grant-funded work is a strategic plan for people with disabilities for sustainability after the grant period. Ms. Boucher has been working with Marc Malkasian, ADA Transition Planner and Despina Harris of RIDOT's Office of Highway Safety. There is a policy to include images of people with disabilities in images. When data is collected, people with disabilities should be included. Ms. Boucher would like to include the policy in the transportation strategic plans. Ms. Polselli spoke of health promotion and access to care in relation to people with disabilities. For example, obesity and people with arthritis should be included in plans. When planning workshops, the policy is to make sure it is accessible by public transportation. There is promotion of health for people with disabilities; sometimes people do not have access to health and welfare offices; the RI Dept. of Health has contracted with Accessible Rhode Island to put this accessibility information online.

Ms. Boucher was happy to hear that RIDOT and Statewide Planning are doing work similar to the RI Dept. of Health's. Mr. Schiller suggested that they review the TIP to see how money is spent on accessibility and make suggestions. Ms. Drew said as the representative of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, she will take the information back to the ADA person. Transit has important links to

accessibility. Some shopping centers do not allow public transit. Dr. Drew said the TAC is very sensitive to those issues, and it pushes RIPTA to be more accessible. Dr. Drew gave an example of a shopping center in South County that does not allow in RIPTA buses, which limits access. Dr. Drew suggested that they work together on this; the issue needs a push from the group. Ms. Picchione of RIPTA stated that there is a federal requirement to have an accessible bus within $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. There are also monthly meetings with RIPTA's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) to provide input on the accessibility of all transportation services and other transportation-related issues affecting persons with disabilities.

Mr. Monaghan stated that in the last 20 years RIDOT established non-ADA compliance i.e. on sidewalks and obstructions and clearance projects. Part of MAP-21 is to look at the component measures. Ms. Polselli said that they have public forums about concerns such as obstructions. Much of this is taken care of through construction contracts. The third area in which the Office of Special Needs works is emergency preparedness including ways of communicating with various kinds of people.

7. Draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan 2014

Ms. Shocket asked for the vote to approve the State Rail Plan for a voting clarification for the record. The motion was approved with all of those in-favor, except one member who voted no.

8. Staff Report

Ms. Scott stated that staff has been working with Family Service of Rhode Island on a Safe Routes to School grant for a Walking School Bus, which is now finalized. It is the largest Safe Routes to School (SRTS) non-infrastructure grant in Rhode Island. Family Service of Rhode Island has been doing a Walking School Bus on its own to reduce truancy issues, which has received good publicity. The grant is for three elementary schools in Providence. Statewide Planning will be funding them for two years with SRTS non-infrastructure funds and hopes to expand it to five elementary schools in Providence.

Ms. Scott said Statewide Planning is in the midst of its MPO recertification, which occurs every four years. The Federal Highway Administration reviews Statewide Planning's activities to make sure it is meeting federal requirements. Statewide Planning has already submitted a substantial amount of written material, and federal representatives will be visiting on March 27 and 28. A Public Hearing on the recertification will be part of the next TAC meeting on March 27 at 6:30 p.m. Recertification is very important for Statewide Planning and the State, and all are encouraged to attend the next TAC meeting. Ms. Scott will share the full site visit schedule with the TAC in advance. Ms. Sherrill asked if a substitute from a TAC member agency can attend if the original member cannot. Ms. Scott said can send someone from the organization, not if just appointed as a member. Only state agency representatives can vote. Ms. Sherrill suggested in the future may want to consider changing this policy.

9. Additional Public Comment

Mr. Brodd stated that as President of the RI Public Works Association he would speak to the issue of clearing snow from sidewalks and bus stops. There are not enough resources to clear the snow on sidewalks. Property owners are responsible but many are disabled, and they do not have the capability to clear snow. In Rhode Island, there is neither the manpower nor the equipment. There is also the issue of workers who have worked 24 hours straight on roadways; they cannot be expected to work additional hours. Rhode Island has a long way to go to clear the sidewalks for schools as well as bus stops. Rhode Island does not have the ability to deal with snow removal and that it is a real problem. Mr. Wood said that telephone poles and utility companies often obstruct sidewalk work and

construction. The issue also includes catch basins. Utility companies need to do the work to make sidewalks ADA compliant without charging municipalities. Dr. Drew will let Mr. Bob Cooper know of this issue. Mr. Wood said the utility companies will not cooperate. Dr. Drew stated that as climate change occurs, there will be more snowstorms and more attention needs to be paid to these issues.

Ms. Erin Kilouff a student from Brown University was introduced and asked if there were any potential research opportunities. Ms. Lillian Picchione from RIPTA replied for Ms. Kilouff to come speak with her after the meeting.

10. Other Business – *for discussion*

Mr. Schiller discussed transportation funding issues. Senate Bill 2335 and House Bill 7432 both include more funding for transportation with much going to maintenance, but they do not have the necessary revenue increases. Mr. Schiller encourages people to follow the bills and make suggestions. Ms. Brady explained that the Governor's plan would move the state's debt service from the gas tax to a general revenue funding source; first year implementation is underway. If implemented fully, the Governor's plan would ensure that RIDOT would not have a deficit after winter maintenance. The bills in question would take the money used to pay debt service and put it in a fund. It also calls for the collection of a sales tax from internet commerce. Ms. Picchione said the previous plan did not address RIPTA funding. Mr. Schiller said the Coalition for Transportation Choice was told that this bill would provide an additional \$3.5 million over five years to transportation, but additional research is required since it is not written into the bill. Ms. Brady says it recommends taking funding from the General Fund.

11. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Ms. Sherrill, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted By: Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner to Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary.